

Billings Montessori School

2316 Rehberg Lane
Billings, MT 59102

LEGISLATIVE JUDICIARY

Exhibit No. 12
Date 2-20-07
Bill No. SB 482

Senator Jeff Essmann
Capitol Building
Helena, MT 59601

2-19-07

Dear Members of the Senate,

This letter is a demonstration of my strong conviction and support of Senate Bill # 482. I am the Owner and Head of School for Billings Montessori School for the past 37 years. Our students range in age from 3 to 7. We have an expansive play yard and garden area where the children cultivate vegetables and flowers which they plant in the spring, water and nurture in the summer session and harvest in the fall. The outside play area is a natural environment classroom in addition to a play yard. It is surrounded by a six foot tall fence.

We were shocked to learn last summer that we have a Level 3 Sex Offender residing in the apartment complex adjacent to this very play yard. In the summer we noted that a man and his guardian walked frequently by the school on daily walks. Our next door neighbor, who also has a daycare, called to inform us she had identified this man as a Level 3 Sex Offender via the Internet. To follow up we phoned the police to inquire why this individual was allowed to reside so near our two facilities with 130 preschool age children.

Although Montessori children are NEVER alone in the play area it is very disconcerting to learn about this type of danger in our neighborhood. The police officer who came to visit informed us there is no law in the State of Montana to prevent an L3SO from living near a school or child care center. I am also a Certified Therapist, licensed in the State of Montana, #216, for 25 years and as such, would contribute that the lives of children are permanently damaged by sexual predators. Rehabilitation for this disorder is futile.

One month ago during a warm spell our children and staff became upset over a man hanging over our fence. He was incoherent, yelling and waving at the children. We called the police who investigated and related to us that this man was a relative of the L3SO. The SB#482 would greatly relieve the fears of our staff, all teachers, all childcare personnel and all caregivers of young persons in our state.

Thanking you for the opportunity to express gratitude to Jeff and the writers of this bill which will protect defenseless children. I will advocate for this bill in every way possible.

Sincerely Yours,

Nancy Jo McElroy
Nancy Jo McElroy, Head of School